

# Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries

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Throughout the Byzantine era, adoption of the monastic habit entailed vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience and necessitated renunciation of worldly ties, including those of property and family. The architecture of monasteries encouraged this separation from the outside world and the segregation of the sexes by enclosing the precincts with a massive wall and strictly limiting the number of entrances.<sup>1</sup> Such a plan facilitated enforcement of two basic monastic rules that attempted to maintain a distinct and separate space for those who took the habit: the rule of *abaton* designed to keep unwelcome visitors outside, and the rule of enclosure intended to keep monks and nuns inside. The purpose of these rules, of course, was to protect monastics from worldly distraction and sexual temptation. The peril involved in disregarding them was vividly expressed by the father of St. Mary, who advised her when she was about to enter a monastery disguised as the monk Marinos, “Child, take heed how you conduct yourself, for you are about to enter into the midst of fire, for a woman in no way enters a <male> monastery.”<sup>2</sup> The sources preserve several notorious cases where women sneaked into monasteries specifically for purposes of sexual encounters, thus demonstrating that the fears of monastic founders were not totally groundless.<sup>3</sup>

The rule of *abaton*, literally meaning “untrodden” or “inaccessible,” and describing

My thanks to Sharon Gerstel, Alexander Kazhdan(†), Henry Maguire, Svetlana Popović, and Patrick Viscuso, who read and commented on earlier versions of this paper. I am also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers who suggested a number of improvements.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Nov. 133, chap. 1, of Justinian (CIC, *Nov* 668), and the *typikon* of Neilos Damilas, ed. S. Pétridès, “Le typikon de Nil Damilas pour le monastère de femmes de Baeonia en Crète (1400),” *IRAIK* 15 (1911), 107–8. For a survey of monastic gateways, see A. Orlandos, Μοναστηριακή ἀρχιτεκτονική (Athens, 1958), 17–26, and S. Mojsilović-Popović, “Monastery Entrances around the Year 1200,” in *Studenica et l'art byzantin autour de l'année 1200*, ed. V. Korać (Belgrade, 1988), 153–69.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *vita* of St. Mary/Marinos, chap. 4, ed. M. Richard, “La Vie Ancienne de Sainte Marie surnommée Marinos,” in *Corona Gratiarum: Miscellanea patristica, historica et liturgica Eligio Dekkers O.S.B. XII Lustra complenti oblati*, I (Brugge, 1975), 88.29–31. For further examples of similar sentiments, see D. Abrahamse, “Women’s Monasticism in the Middle Byzantine Period: Problems and Prospects,” *ByzF* 9 (1985), 44–45.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., two instances at the Hodegoi monastery ca. 1355, cited in the same synodal document: a woman called Moschonou was accused of visiting the monk Ioasaph in his cell, and Ananias, the nephew of the metropolitan of Tyre, was caught with a prostitute in his cell; cf. J. Darrouzès, *Les regestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, I: *Les actes des patriarches*, IV–VI (Paris, 1932–79), V, no. 2385 (hereafter, *RegPatr*), and MM 1:187, 442–43.

the principle that a male monastery was off-limits to women and vice versa,<sup>4</sup> was codified in both civil and canon law in Byzantium. Thus Novel 133 of Justinian, of the year 539, forbade entrance to a monastery by members of the opposite sex, even of corpses for burial. The only explicit exception was that gravediggers were permitted to enter a nunnery in order to prepare a grave in the cemetery and perform the actual burial. Justinian also forbade men to visit a female convent or women to visit a male monastery for commemorative services.<sup>5</sup> Canon law reiterated this prohibition: canon 47 of the Council in Trullo (691/2), for example, prohibited a woman from spending the night in a male monastery and vice versa, while canon 18 of Nicaea II in 787 prescribed stricter rules, that women were not allowed to visit monasteries under any circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

As we shall see, however, these civil and ecclesiastical regulations represented an ideal that was difficult to achieve in the case of male institutions and impossible for female religious houses. In this paper I review the evidence on the observance of rules of *abaton* and enclosure in Byzantium over a period of approximately six hundred years, ca. 800 to 1400. I have chosen these six centuries because they are particularly rich in sources on monasticism, especially saints' lives, *typika* (monastic foundation documents), and synodal acts.

#### *ABATON AT MALE MONASTERIES*

The *typika* of male monastic houses normally prescribed that the doors were to be barred to women, with some necessary exceptions. Thus the eleventh-century rule for the Evergetis monastery in Constantinople, which served as the model for numerous subsequent *typika*, stated that the founder would have preferred to exclude women totally from the monastic precincts, but felt obligated to permit certain wellborn women to visit for spiritual purposes.<sup>7</sup> At St. Mamas, aristocratic women were vouchsafed permission to attend the burial or memorial rites of relatives of the founder; they were admitted only to the church and had to leave as soon as the ceremony concluded.<sup>8</sup> At the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople, a Comnenian foundation of the twelfth century, three contiguous church buildings still survive to complement and help interpret the evidence of the *typikon*.<sup>9</sup> The rule of John II Komnenos absolutely forbade women to enter the mo-

<sup>4</sup>On the principle of *abaton*, see J. L. van Dieten in *RB* 1 (1969), 49–84, and P. de Meester, *De monachico statu iuxta disciplinam byzantinam* (Vatican City, 1942), 163–66.

<sup>5</sup>Novel 133, chap. 3, CIC, *Nov* 669–71.

<sup>6</sup>G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, II (Athens, 1852), 628–30; I. M. Konidares, *Νομικὴ θεώρηση τῶν μοναστηριακῶν τυπικῶν* (Athens, 1984), 120.

<sup>7</sup>P. Gautier, "Le typikon de la Théotokos Évergétis," *REB* 40 (1982), chap. 39.

<sup>8</sup>S. Eustratiades, "Τυπικὸν τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει μονῆς τοῦ ἀγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Μάμαντος," *Hellenika* 1 (1928), 282–83. The *vita* of Symeon the Theologian describes the vain efforts of the mother of his disciple Arsenios to visit her son at the St. Mamas monastery. Although the porter yielded to her importunate supplications and announced her arrival to Arsenios, the young monk steadfastly refused to see his mother, even though she spent three days outside the gate; cf. I. Hausherr, *Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949–1022) par Nicetas Stethatos* (Rome, 1928), chap. 46.

<sup>9</sup>On the complex of the Pantokrator monastery, see A. H. S. Megaw, "Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul," *DOP* 17 (1963), 335–64; G. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1984), 289–95; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire*

nastic precincts, declaring that the monastery was *abatos*. He did, however, make provision for noblewomen to attend funeral and memorial services by entering through the door of the northern Eleousa church rather than through the main gate of the complex.<sup>10</sup> In addition, women were admitted to this church every Friday night when a procession was held and elderly women attendants helped distribute water from the phiale.<sup>11</sup> The Eleousa, described by the *typikon* as being “near” or “next to” the monastery,<sup>12</sup> was thus apparently considered to be separate from the monastic complex, and hence female worshipers would not contravene the provisions of the *typikon*. From the Eleousa, visitors could proceed directly into the adjoining middle church of St. Michael, which served as a mausoleum for both male and female members of the imperial family;<sup>13</sup> it was also considered to lie outside the monastery precincts,<sup>14</sup> which began with the attached south church of the Pantocrator that served as the *katholikon*. Also outside the precincts was a fifty-bed hospital attached to the monastery, which was intended for the care of lay people and included a ward with twelve beds for women.<sup>15</sup> As I interpret the *typikon* text, the Pantocrator churches must have been situated at the very edge of the monastic precinct, so that there could be free public access to the Eleousa church. The disposition of the three churches at Pantocrator thus provided a means whereby women could be admitted to a church associated with the monastery, but not enter the precincts themselves.

At the contemporary Kosmosoteira, a male monastery at Pherrai in Thrace, women were permitted to enter the church for worship only three times a year, on the Marian feast days of the Annunciation (March 25), the Birth of the Virgin (September 8), and her Dormition (August 15). This was a concession of the founder, Isaac Komnenos, who wanted in principle to limit women’s worship at the *katholikon*, so as not to detract from its “good appearance” (*εύπρέπεια*), but at the same time felt he should occasionally permit women to make their devotions to the Virgin and to pray for his “wretched soul.” Isaac specified that the female worshipers were to avoid any contact with the monks, by entering through the east gate of the monastery complex and waiting until the monks had left the church after the conclusion of the liturgy. On these three days, women visitors were, however, permitted to meet with their male relatives in the monastery courtyard under the watchful supervision of the abbot. During the rest of the year, women

<sup>10</sup>byzantin, I: *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*, 3, *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), 515–23, 564–66 (hereafter, Janin, *Églises CP*). For plans of the monastery, see T. F. Mathews, *The Byzantine Churches of Istanbul: A Photographic Survey* (University Park, Pa., 1976), 74, and W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen, 1977), 210.

<sup>11</sup>P. Gautier, “Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator,” *REB* 32 (1974), 61.530–34: οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς πύλης τῆς μονῆς εἰσελεύσονται, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῆς πύλης τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Ἐλεούσης.

<sup>12</sup>There were four of these female attendants called *graptai*; two served at a time during alternate weeks. These women also helped to keep the church clean; cf. Gautier, “Pantocrator,” 77.785–94.

<sup>13</sup>Gautier, “Pantocrator,” 73.728–33: πλησίον τῆς τοισύτης μονῆς.

<sup>14</sup>For the burial of John II and his wife Irene at the church, see Gautier, “Pantocrator,” 47.289–90, 73.728–32; cf. E. and M. Jeffreys, “Immortality in the Pantocrator?” *JÖB* 44 (1994), 193–201. Manuel I and his wife Irene were also interred in the mausoleum of St. Michael.

<sup>15</sup>Gautier, “Pantocrator,” 73.730–32: μεταξὺ τοῦ τοιούτου ναοῦ καὶ τῆς μονῆς ἔτερον εὐκτήριον . . . ἐπ’ ὄνοματι τοῦ . . . Μιχαήλ.

<sup>16</sup>Gautier, “Pantocrator,” 83–109.

were refused entrance and had to be content with venerating a mosaic icon of the Virgin hanging on the gate leading into the monastery courtyard.<sup>16</sup>

The *typika* of some male monasteries were so strict with regard to contact between the monks and any women that they even forbade charitable distributions at the monastery gate to individual female beggars. In the words of the *typikon* for the Evergetis monastery: “It is our wish that no one should go away from our gate empty-handed unless it should be a woman. For no <individual> distribution should be made to these <women>, not because we despise their kindred <nature>, by no means, but we must be on guard against the harm ensuing therefrom, lest out of habit they begin to frequent the gate more often <and> become a cause of evil rather than good for those who dole out <the alms>.” The Evergetine *typikon* did, however, permit women to receive food at the time of general distributions on major feast days, “for this happens rarely and does not cause us any harm.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite all the restrictions on female access, there were legitimate reasons for granting women occasional and brief admittance to a male monastery: to attend funeral or commemorative services (a privilege normally limited to relatives of aristocratic founders), to attend services on the monastery’s feast day,<sup>18</sup> or for pilgrimage to a holy shrine within the monastic precincts. At some men’s monasteries, access to healing tombs was readily available to male and female pilgrims alike. At Hosios Loukas, for example, as at most monasteries, the *katholikon* was in the middle of the monastery, and pilgrims would have to pass through a courtyard to reach the shrine.<sup>19</sup> At the Kosmidion shrine in Constantinople the pilgrims established themselves under shaded porticoes. They brought their own bedding with them; curtains were sometimes used to partition off private space, but often men and women pilgrims lay right next to each other.<sup>20</sup> Some male houses, for instance, the monasteries of Tarasios and Ignatios, whose rules forbade access by women, in effect also prevented them from making pilgrimage to seek a miraculous cure at the saint’s reliquary housed in the *katholikon*. In such cases women might get around this prohibition by sending male servants or relatives to obtain for them some

<sup>16</sup> L. Petit, “Typikon du monastère de la Kosmosoteira près d’Aenos (1152),” *IRAIK* 13 (1908), chap. 84, pp. 60–61. The *Acta* of the brothers David, Symeon, and George, on the other hand, present a much less rigorous picture of interaction between the monks and their female relatives. Thus, when David’s mother came to visit him at his monastery, he sent a monk to escort her from the seashore and greeted her with a warm embrace; cf. I. van den Gheyn, “Acta graeca ss. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii Mitylenae in insula Lesbo,” *AB* 18 (1890), 217–18.

<sup>17</sup> Gautier, “Évergétis,” chap. 38, p. 83.1184–91. Very similar prohibitions are found in Petit, “Kosmosoteira,” chap. 56, p. 47.21–27, and in the Phoberou *typikon*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Noctes Petropolitanae* (St. Petersburg, 1913), chap. 55, p. 74.

<sup>18</sup> As we have seen at Kosmosoteira; see also P. Gautier, “Le typikon du sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos,” *REB* 42 (1984), chap. 23, p. 105.1413–15, which states that women are permitted in the church of the Pakourianos monastery only on its feast day.

<sup>19</sup> It is not clear from the *vita* of St. Luke of Steiris whether his healing shrine was located (as C. Connor assumes) in the crypt, which has a separate entrance, or in the church above it. For a plan of Hosios Loukas, see C. Connor, *Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium: The Crypt at Hosios Loukas and Its Frescoes* (Princeton, N.J., 1991), fig. 1. For similar disposition of the *katholikon* at the Boeotian monasteries of Sagmatas and Hosios Meletios, see Orlando, *Μοναστηριακή ἀρχιτεκτονική*, figs. 8–9.

<sup>20</sup> See A.-J. Festugière, *Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint Georges* (Paris, 1971), 89.

sort of *eulogia* (usually an ampulla of holy oil or water).<sup>21</sup> Other women were so desperate to touch a saint's tomb that they resorted to disguise as a man or as a eunuch.<sup>22</sup> Sometimes, as a concession, the holy relics were carried to the entrance of the *katholikon* church so they could be revered by women visiting the monastery.<sup>23</sup> Yet another solution to the problem of visitation by female pilgrims may have been to locate the *katholikon* at the edge of a monastic complex with an exterior public entrance, as at Pantokrator. Parallels for this siting of the *katholikon* can be found in at least two other Constantinopolitan monasteries, Kalenderhane Cami and the Pammakaristos.<sup>24</sup> Finally, I should mention the healing shrine of St. Peter of Atroa in Bithynia as another paradigm of accommodation of pilgrims. First of all, during Peter's lifetime a chapel of the Virgin was built outside the monastery enclosure where Peter could meet female pilgrims. After his death his relics were moved to a grotto-chapel near but outside the monastery, again to facilitate access by female pilgrims.<sup>25</sup>

The principle of *abaton* at male religious houses came to be extended from single monasteries to entire complexes of monasteries on holy mountains, as on Mount Athos.<sup>26</sup> The same rule of exclusion of women held true for Meteora, where the fourteenth-century *typikon* of St. Athanasios ordered that women were not to enter the precincts of the holy mountain, nor to be given any food to eat, even if they were dying of hunger.<sup>27</sup> The total absence of nunneries from Mount Latros leads us to conclude that this was another holy mountain that prohibited the presence of women. On other holy mountains of western Asia Minor, Galesion, Auxentios, and Olympos, for example, attempts were made to control the presence of women by permitting the establishment of a single female convent, designed primarily to house the relatives of monks residing on those holy mountains.<sup>28</sup> At Auxentios the nunnery was located on the lower slopes of the mountain, while the male monastery was near the summit.<sup>29</sup> An effort was even made to exclude

<sup>21</sup>Thus, in the *vita Ignatii*, one woman dispatched servants to bring her some of the saint's hair in *afomyrisma* (probably *myron*, the sweet-smelling exudation from the saint's remains), while another woman sent her husband to fetch her some of the holy oil (PG 105:561c–d).

<sup>22</sup>Thus a demoniac woman was disguised as a man by her uncle so she could spend the night next to the tomb of Elias Spelaiotes (*AASS*, Sept. 3: chap. 82), and two other women suffering from an issue of blood dressed as eunuchs in order to gain entrance to the tomb of Tarasios (I. A. Heikel, *Ignatii Diaconi Vita Tarasii archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani* [Helsingfors, 1891], 421.29–37).

<sup>23</sup>Cf. C. Bouras, *Nea Moni on Chios: History and Architecture* (Athens, 1982), 167 and n. 2.

<sup>24</sup>For plans of Kalenderhane Cami and Pammakaristos, see Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, 154 and 132; see also H. Hallensleben, "Untersuchungen zur Baugeschichte der ehemaligen Pammakaristoskirche, der heutigen Fethiye camii in Istanbul," *IstMitt* 13–14 (1963–64), 128–93, esp. figs. 3, 4, and 15.

<sup>25</sup>The rule of Peter's monastery absolutely forbade entrance to women; cf. V. Laurent, *La Vie merveilleuse de saint Pierre d'Atroa* (Brussels, 1956), 54 and 169.18–22. For the translation of Peter's relics, see V. Laurent, *La Vita retractata et les miracles posthumes de saint Pierre d'Atroa* (Brussels, 1958), chap. 97.

<sup>26</sup>On *abaton* at Athos, see S. Papadatos, Τὸ πρόβλημα τοῦ ἀβάτου τοῦ Ἀγίου Ὄπους (Thessalonike, 1969), and A.-M. Talbot, "Women and Mt. Athos," in *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism*, ed. A. Bryer and M. Cunningham (Aldershot, Hampshire, 1996), 67–79.

<sup>27</sup>N. Bees, "Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ιστορίαν τῶν μονῶν τῶν Μετεώρων," *Byzantis* 1 (1909), 251, article 7; cf. also p. 259: δὰ τὸ ἄβατον εἶναι γυναιξὶ τὰ κύκλῳ τοῦ Μετεώρου. Here we can see the extension of the misogynistic provision in the Evergetine *typikon* (see note 17 above) to the entire Meteora complex.

<sup>28</sup>For further details, see A.-M. Talbot, "A Comparison of the Monastic Experience of Byzantine Men and Women," *GOTR* 30 (1985), 2–3.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), 46.

women from the entirety of Patmos, as we learn from a chrysobull of Emperor Alexios I forbidding women to live on the hallowed island where Christodoulos was establishing the monastery of St. John the Theologian; but Christodoulos was forced to change the rule when he could not find unmarried construction workers to come to the island, especially when he realized that he needed not only builders on a temporary basis but long-term laborers. He compromised by requiring the workmen's families, especially the women, to remain confined to one corner of the island.<sup>30</sup>

The rule of *abaton* on holy mountains was obviously intended to preserve the special purity of the monks inhabiting these isolated monastic complexes. I would also argue that the masculine character of holy mountains was enhanced by the tendency in Byzantium for female convents to be built in urban locations that were deemed safer than the countryside for the weaker sex. Moreover, since nuns of the middle and late Byzantine centuries almost always resided in cenobitic institutions, they were not as attracted to the wild mountainous regions of Greece and Anatolia as were the holy men who readily moved back and forth between the cenobitic life and the solitary existence of hermits.<sup>31</sup>

#### DOUBLE MONASTERIES

Double monasteries, that is, male and female monasteries built either contiguous to or closely associated with each other, under the rule of a single superior,<sup>32</sup> were frowned upon by both civil and religious authorities in Byzantium. Justinian attempted to prohibit such institutions in his Novel 123 of the year 546,<sup>33</sup> but they continue to be attested into the eighth century, as at Mantineion.<sup>34</sup> Around the year 800, however, these complexes seem to have been effectively suppressed: canon 20 of the seventh ecumenical council, Nicaea II (787), prohibited any future double foundations, and ca. 810 Patriarch Nikephoros I totally closed all such institutions.<sup>35</sup> For three centuries thereafter (800–1100) no double monasteries are mentioned in the sources. Double monasteries reappear in the twelfth century, for example, the male monastery of Christ Philanthropos and the convent of the Kecharitomene jointly founded by Irene Doukaina,<sup>36</sup> and are known in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as well, on Mount Ganos and in Constantinople.<sup>37</sup> Since there are no physical remains of these complexes, our knowledge of them must be

<sup>30</sup> E. L. Vranouse, Βυζαντινὰ ἔγγραφα τῆς μονῆς Πάτμου, I (Athens, 1980), no. 6, p. 60, lines λγ'–λε', 1–8; *typikon* of Christodoulos, MM 6:66–68.

<sup>31</sup> For more on this, see Talbot, "Comparison," 2–4.

<sup>32</sup> On double monasteries, see S. Hilpisch, *Die Doppelkloster: Entstehung und Organisation* (Münster, 1928), 5–24; J. Pargoire, "Les monastères doubles chez les byzantins," *EO* 9 (1906), 21–25; *ODB* II:1392; Talbot, "Comparison," 5–7.

<sup>33</sup> CIC, *Nov* 123.36.

<sup>34</sup> *Synaxarium CP*, 849–50.

<sup>35</sup> For canon 20 of Nicaea II, see Rhalles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα*, II, 637–38. The action of Nikephoros is described in his *vita*, ed. C. de Boor, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica* (Leipzig, 1880), 159–60.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Janin, *Églises CP*, 188–91, 525–27; P. Gautier, "Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitôménè," *REB* 43 (1985), 139. It should be noted that each part of the monastery had its own superior.

<sup>37</sup> Complexes on Mount Ganos and at Xerolophos in the capital were associated with Athanasios I, patriarch of Constantinople (1289–93, 1303–9). For bibliography, see Talbot, "Comparison," nn. 23–25. On the monastery of Christ the Savior, see R. H. Trone, "A Constantinopolitan Double Monastery of the Fourteenth Century: The Philanthropic Savior," *ByzSt* 10 (1983), 81–87.

based on scanty textual references that provide virtually no indication of the physical layout of these institutions. The Kecharitomene *typikon* informs us that convent and male monastery were divided by a wall and that the two institutions had separate water channels.<sup>38</sup> The homilies of Theoleptos of Philadelphia address the monks and nuns of Philanthropos Soter separately, thus implying that they attended the daily offices in different churches.<sup>39</sup> A passage in one of his Easter homilies has been taken by one scholar to suggest that the monks and nuns ate together in the monastery, but should surely be interpreted metaphorically.<sup>40</sup> The *vita* of St. Philotheos of Athos does seem to imply, on the other hand, that monks and nuns at a double monastery at Neapolis attended the liturgy together;<sup>41</sup> they may have been separated by a wall or screen. It seems most likely that double monasteries had separate areas for monks and nuns, divided by a wall, but in some cases may have shared the use of the *katholikon*. It is surely significant that in his decree of 1383 dividing the double monastery of Athanasios on Xerolophos, Patriarch Neilos Kerameus carefully detailed the division of properties previously owned in common, but made no division of buildings, thus suggesting that each part of the monastery had its own church, refectory, kitchens, and so on.<sup>42</sup>

#### *ABATON AND ENCLOSURE IN FEMALE CONVENTS*

I now turn to nunneries and review their rules of enclosure and *abaton* and the visiting privileges of men who sought entrance.<sup>43</sup> In principle, nuns were cloistered for life and could go out of their convent only in extraordinary circumstances, for instance, if a parent was sick or dying.<sup>44</sup> In such cases, the twelfth-century Kecharitomene *typikon* permitted a nun to leave the cloister for the day, accompanied by two aged nuns, to visit her parents' house. The late-thirteenth-century rule for the Lips convent was somewhat more liberal, stating that a nun need be accompanied on such a visit only if she were of unreliable reputation. In fact, however, nuns did leave their convents for a number of other

<sup>38</sup>Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," 115.1677–90, 139.2115–16.

<sup>39</sup>R. E. Sinkewicz, *Theoleptos of Philadelphia: The Monastic Discourses* (Toronto, 1992), 19.

<sup>40</sup>In homily 17 (p. 302), referring to the death of the monk Leo Monomachos, Theoleptos says to the nuns: "You know, my sisters, you saw him with your own eyes and had him as a guest at table and as a fellow traveller on the way (συνεστιάτορα καὶ συνοδοιπόρον εἴχετε αὐτόν); together you plied the sea of this life" (trans. Sinkewicz). R. Janin (followed by Sinkewicz) suggests that Leo may have been a priest or confessor in the women's convent; cf. his "Les monastères du Christ Philanthrope à Constantinople," *REB* 4 (1946), 153. R. Trone ("Double Monastery," 86) has interpreted this passage as meaning that "the men and women of the monastery associated at table, had a common diet, and did some ordinary work together, but did not worship together." Another passage in homily 9 (p. 220) that might imply a common refectory (αὐτῇ ἡ χάρις τοῦ κοινοβίου . . . ἡ περιοχὴ τῶν μονῶν μία. ὁ οἶκος τῶν iερῶν ὑμῶν ὁ αὐτός τῆς ἐστιάσεως ἡ τράπεζα ἡ αὐτή) could well be a general description of cenobitic life, rather than a specific allusion to Philanthropos Soter; cf. Sinkewicz, *Theoleptos*, 19.

<sup>41</sup>B. Papoulia, "Die Vita des Heiligen Philotheos vom Athos," *SüdostF* 22 (1963), 274–76.

<sup>42</sup>MM 2:80–83.

<sup>43</sup>For a convenient survey of the regulations of *typika* for Byzantine convents, see C. Galatariotou, "Byzantine Women's Monastic Communities: The Evidence of the *Typika*," *JÖB* 38 (1988), 262–90. See also Abramse, "Women's Monasticism," 35–58, esp. 40–47, and A. E. Laiou, "Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women," *ByzF* 9 (1985), 59–102.

<sup>44</sup>Cf., e.g., Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," 61.761–67; Lips *typikon*, chap. 15, and Bebaia Elpis *typikon*, chap. 77, in H. Delehaye, *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues* (Brussels, 1921), 114.18–115.6 and 63.12–64.5 (hereafter Lips and Bebaia Elpis).

reasons, as we learn from the *typika* themselves as well as from the texts of saints' lives and synodal acts. Thus upon the occasion of the installation of a newly elected abbess, a group of nuns might escort their superior to the imperial palace or patriarchate where the emperor or patriarch would entrust the abbess with the staff of office.<sup>45</sup> Some nuns had duties that took them outside the cloister; thus Theodora of Thessalonike is described as going to the market to buy firewood,<sup>46</sup> and a female *oikonomos* (steward) might have to visit properties owned by her convent.<sup>47</sup> Nuns also went out for other business purposes, for instance, to request rental payments for a garden they had leased out,<sup>48</sup> to petition the synod, or to appear as witnesses or defendants in lawsuits.<sup>49</sup> On occasion a nun might leave to visit her spiritual father or to attend the wake of a relative.<sup>50</sup> Finally, there are numerous references to nuns going on pilgrimage to a shrine or seeking healing at a saint's tomb.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the sweeping declarations of the *typika* of female convents that their precincts were forbidden to men,<sup>52</sup> the very same documents outlined numerous exceptions to this rule. The major difficulty with the concept of *abaton* at a nunnery was of course that a female religious house could not function without the entrance into its precincts of members of the male sex, because certain positions necessary for the everyday operations of a convent were held only by men. Thus male priests were indispensable, as were father confessors, physicians, workmen, gravediggers, and sometimes male stewards, gardeners, and singers. The founders of convents dealt with this problem in several ways: by limiting most such appointments to elderly or married men or to eunuchs; by limiting the frequency of their access to the convent; and by limiting the areas within the convent they could visit.

Priests were the most frequent male visitors to the convent because of the need for

<sup>45</sup>Cf. Lips, chap. 7, and Bebaia Elpis, chap. 26.

<sup>46</sup>S. Paschalides, 'Ο βίος τῆς ὁσιομυροβλύτιδος Θεοδώρας τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ (Thessalonike, 1991), chap. 23 (hereafter V. *Theod. Thess.*).

<sup>47</sup>Cf. Bebaia Elpis, chap. 54.

<sup>48</sup>MM 2:501–2 (*RegPatr* VI, no. 3212).

<sup>49</sup>Numerous examples are to be found in the acts of the synod of Constantinople; see, for instance, *RegPatr* VI, nos. 3215 and 3216 (MM 2:506–9 and 2:509–10). To summarize two such cases, in 1348 a nun appealed to the synod with regard to the dowry of her deceased sister which her brother-in-law had appropriated (*RegPatr* V, no. 2304; MM 1:283–84), while in 1397 the nun Hypomone filed a complaint against her son-in-law in an attempt to recover the property willed to her by her daughter (*RegPatr* VI, no. 3061; MM 2:347–48). These lawsuits indicate, by the way, that not all nuns had renounced interest in their family property. For other instances, see *RegPatr* V, nos. 2064, 2156, 2157.

<sup>50</sup>The 15th-century nun Eulogia-Eugenia was given permission to visit her confessor, the metropolitan of Chalcedon; cf. V. Laurent, "La direction spirituelle des grandes dames à Byzance: La correspondance inédite d'un métropolite de Chalcédoine," *REB* 8 (1951), 67, 71, 73, 76. The princess Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina was allowed by her spiritual confessor to attend the wake of her aunt; cf. A. C. Hero, *A Woman's Quest for Spiritual Guidance: The Correspondence of Princess Irene Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina* (Brookline, Mass., 1986), ep. 22.1–2.

<sup>51</sup>E.g., pilgrimage of a group of nuns from the convent of the Theotokos tou Maroule to the Pege shrine (MM 1:223); the abbess of the convent of Kachlakine in Arkadioupolis, accompanied by two nuns, journeyed to Bizye to the tomb of Mary the Younger (*AASS*, Nov. 4:698EF); a demoniac nun sought a cure at the tomb of St. Thomais at the convent of Ta Mikra Rhomaiou (*AASS*, Nov. 4:240AB); another demoniac nun traveled from Bulgaria to Bizye to seek healing at the tomb of St. Mary the Younger (*AASS*, Nov. 4:698C).

<sup>52</sup>E.g., Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," 39.324, 329; 61.743–44, 758–59; 63.773–74; 145.2269–70.

them to celebrate the liturgy and certain monastic offices.<sup>53</sup> The twelfth-century Kecharitomene *typikon* specified that they should be eunuchs (preferably monks),<sup>54</sup> as did a proclamation of Patriarch Arsenios in the mid-thirteenth century, which added that the eunuchs should be elderly.<sup>55</sup> The rules of two Palaiologan nunneries stipulated that the liturgy be celebrated by married secular priests, ideally of mature years.<sup>56</sup>

Another man who regularly frequented the convent was the spiritual father of the nuns. He might be a solitary or cenobitic monk, or even a bishop;<sup>57</sup> Irene Doukaina, foundress of the Kecharitomene convent, required this individual to be a eunuch, just like the priests.<sup>58</sup> The primary function of the spiritual father was to hear individual confessions from the nuns and to deliver homilies of exhortation. He normally heard confession in the narthex of the church or “inside the convent” (presumably in a heated building) if the weather was too cold. His frequency of visitation varied from convent to convent, daily at Bebaia Elpis, three days per month at Lips.<sup>59</sup> In the latter case the spiritual father would spend the night in “the small rooms assigned for this purpose in the hospice (*xenon*),” which was “attached to” but considered separate from the convent proper.<sup>60</sup>

The *oikonomos*, or steward, of a convent might be either male or female,<sup>61</sup> depending on the rule of a given institution; when the appointment of a man was specified, a eunuch was preferred.<sup>62</sup> Since the steward needed to visit all parts of the complex for inspection of the upkeep of the buildings, he had to be a man of impeccable reputation. Nevertheless, some limits were imposed on his freedom of movement; at Lips, for example, he had to meet with the abbess in the presence of the chief nunnery officials and to take his midday meal in one of the rooms of the hospice rather than in the refectory.<sup>63</sup> At Kecharitomene the physician also had to be a eunuch or very elderly.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>53</sup>The basic article on this subject is by E. Papagianne, “Οι κληρικοί των βυζαντινών γυναικείων μονών και το άβατο,” *Βυζαντικά* 6 (1986), 77–93.

<sup>54</sup>Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 15, p. 59.708. It should be noted that canon 22 of the Holy Apostles forbade the ordination only of eunuchs who had castrated themselves; those castrated by others could become bishops (canon 21); cf. Rhalles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα*, II, 29–30.

<sup>55</sup>*RegPatr* IV, no. 1374, par. 16; PG 119:1144D–1145A. This preference for eunuch priests provides confirmation of K. Ringrose’s thesis of the Byzantine eunuch as a mediator, in this case between the convent and the outside world; cf. K. Ringrose, “Eunuchs as Cultural Mediators in Byzantium,” *BSCAbstr* 21 (New York, 1995), 57.

<sup>56</sup>Bebaia Elpis, chap. 79, p. 65.7–9; Pétridès, “Damilas,” 107.

<sup>57</sup>Solitary or cenobitic monk: Lips, chap. 11, p. 112.28. The spiritual directors of Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina in the 14th century and of the nun Eulogia in the 15th were both metropolitans; cf. Hero, *Choumnaina*, 19, and Laurent, “Direction spirituelle,” 68.

<sup>58</sup>Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 16, p. 59.722–23.

<sup>59</sup>On the spiritual father, see Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 16, p. 59; Lips, chap. 11; Bebaia Elpis, chaps. 105–11; Pétridès, “Damilas,” 103.

<sup>60</sup>Lips, chap. 11, p. 113.2–3; chap. 50, p. 134.10.

<sup>61</sup>Female stewards were appointed at the convents of Bebaia Elpis and Damilas; cf. Bebaia Elpis, chaps. 54–55, and Pétridès, “Damilas,” 108–9.

<sup>62</sup>Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” 55.646–57.654 (a eunuch, preferably one of the convent priests); Lips, chap. 25, pp. 119.23–120.22 (“a man or eunuch”); *typikon* of nunnery of Kosmas and Damian, chap. 59, ed. Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 139.6–7 (“a eunuch or otherwise respectable man”).

<sup>63</sup>Lips, chap. 26.

<sup>64</sup>Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 57, p. 107.1572.

Irene Doukaina, whose rules for the Kecharitomene tend to be more strict than those of later convent founders, was adamant about refusing entrance to male singers or *psaltai*, even on special feast days or days of commemoration.<sup>65</sup> At the Lips convent, Theodora Palaiologina also normally prohibited the admission of the singers of psalms called *kalliphonoi*, but she was willing to make an exception on the birthday of the Theotokos, when her son, Emperor Andronikos II, came to the convent for services.<sup>66</sup>

Other men admitted on official business might be workmen, gravediggers, or a lay administrator of the convent. If a garden or vineyard was situated within the convent walls, then male gardeners or vinedressers might also have to enter the monastery precincts.<sup>67</sup>

Men like priests and physicians had an *official* role to play at the convent and of necessity had access to specified parts of the convent complex in order to carry out their duties. The *typika* placed much greater restrictions on men who came for *personal* reasons, to see their female relatives or for worship, and on certain laymen who came on business. A man wishing to talk to a female relative in the nunnery was not permitted to enter the monastic precincts, but had to meet her outside the gatehouse in the company of respected nuns,<sup>68</sup> or else to sit in the area “between the two gates,” evidently a reference to the space in the gatehouse between the outer and inner gates, where there might be benches.<sup>69</sup> Significantly it was specified that the nun should “return to the convent” after her meeting; thus the convent proper was considered to begin at the *inner* gate.<sup>70</sup> Not even the serious illness of a nun would provide the excuse for a male relative to come inside the nunnery; in such a case the ailing nun was to be carried on a stretcher to the gate.<sup>71</sup> The gatehouse was also the location where the abbess might meet with estate managers.<sup>72</sup>

The *typika* also made provision for men to visit the convent church, especially if it housed the tombs of relatives.<sup>73</sup> Irene Doukaina, however, placed limitations on these visitors, even if they were her sons, sons-in-law, or grandsons, for they were restricted to the exonarthex of the church while the nuns were singing the office; after the choir sisters had returned to their dormitory, the relatives of the foundress could enter the

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., chap. 75.

<sup>66</sup>Lips, chap. 39. As an anonymous reader has observed, these objections to the entrance of male singers may not have been based solely on their gender, but also on the belief that professional hymn singing was an embellishment more appropriate for public celebration and lay congregations than for monastic communities, for similar restrictions were enjoined in the *typika* of male monasteries; cf. *typikon* of Blemmydes, chap. 13, ed. A. Heisenberg, *Nicephori Blemmydae curriculum vitae et carmina* (Leipzig, 1896), 98, and H. Delehaye, “Constantini Acropolitae hagiographi byzantini epistularum manipulus,” *AB* 51 (1933), chap. 7, p. 283.

<sup>67</sup>For further discussion of monastic horticulture and gardeners, see my forthcoming article, “Byzantine Horticulture and the Monastic Landscape.”

<sup>68</sup>Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 17, p. 61.748–49; Lips, chap. 15, p. 114.28–29.

<sup>69</sup>Bebaia Elpis, chap. 76, p. 63.1–2. For an example of such a gatehouse at the Holy Apostles in Thessalonike, see G. Velenis, “Ο πυλώνας τῆς μονῆς τῶν Ἀγ. ἀποστόλων Θεσσαλονίκης,” Ἀφιέρωμα στὴ μνήμη Στυλιανοῦ Πελεκανίδη = *Makedonika*, suppl. 5 (Thessalonike, 1983), 23–36. A woodcut of the Pammakaristos shows a bench in the gatehouse; cf. Hallensleben, “Pammakaristoskirche” (as in note 24 above), fig. 3.

<sup>70</sup>Bebaia Elpis, chap. 76, p. 63.9–11.

<sup>71</sup>Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 17, p. 61.749–54.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., chap. 17, p. 63.768–74.

<sup>73</sup>E.g., Lips, chap. 16: Theodora Palaiologina’s relatives are permitted to visit the churches and tombs.

church proper and converse with the abbess, who was to be escorted by two or three aged nuns.<sup>74</sup>

The evidence of saints' lives and other sources supplements that of the *typika*, suggesting that male visitors to convents were in fact not uncommon, especially if they had business with the abbess or with a nun who had the reputation of a holy woman. Thus Irene of Chrysobalanton received at her convent a sea captain, imperial emissaries, and her adviser Christopher, and shared a meal with a kinsman recently released from prison.<sup>75</sup> Theodora of Thessalonike was visited by emissaries from the archimandrite of Thessalonike, while her daughter Theopiste had frequent contact with a man named Theodosios who was a patron of the monastery and even seems to have lived there for a while, presumably in the hospice.<sup>76</sup> Michael Psellos was not only permitted to visit his mother at her convent but even to spend the night there.<sup>77</sup> The abbess Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina enjoyed visits from intellectuals with whom she could hold literary and theological discussions.<sup>78</sup>

The funerals and memorial rites of saintly nuns attracted vast throngs of both men and women to convents; thus at the death of Irene of Chrysobalanton, we are told that all the citizens of Constantinople, male and female, flocked to the convent; they thronged the forecourt of the church in the desire to touch her body as it was laid out for burial.<sup>79</sup> In a similar vein, "an enormous crowd of monastics and laymen sat in attendance" when the abbess Anna of the convent of St. Stephen was on her deathbed, and monks and priests came for the funeral of Theodora of Thessalonike.<sup>80</sup> If the corpses of these women were laid out for burial in the narthex of the church, it is not so surprising that they were accessible to lay people from outside. But what are we to think of Anna on her deathbed? Were male mourners admitted to her cell?

#### GENDERED SPACE IN THE CONVENT

The Dumbarton Oaks colloquium on women's space has encouraged us to think of women's activities in terms of the space they occupied, and not just in terms of their status and functions. I find this a helpful prism through which to view the Byzantine convent and conclude this discussion with a review of which parts of the complex were accessible only to nuns and in which areas they might interact with male visitors. No Byzantine convent still stands today so that we can visualize its plan, with the exception of Areia near Nauplion, founded in the twelfth century as a convent for thirty-six nuns,

<sup>74</sup> Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," chap. 80, pp. 145.2271–147.2281.

<sup>75</sup> V. Iren. *Chrysobalant.* 80–82, 94, 100–102.

<sup>76</sup> V. *Theod. Thess.*, chap. 36; *Translation and Miracles*, chaps. 2–3, 13.

<sup>77</sup> K. N. Sathas, Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη, V (Paris, 1876), 37.26–28.

<sup>78</sup> A. C. Hero, "Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina, Abbess of the Convent of Philanthropos Soter in Constantinople," *ByzF* 9 (1985), 136 and n. 49. See also Nikephoros Choumnos, ep. 163, ed. J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Nova* (Paris, 1844), 181–82; D. Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaios von Ephesos im Codex Vindobonensis Theol. Gr. 174* (Berlin, 1974), ep. B32.

<sup>79</sup> V. Iren. *Chrysobalant.*, chap. 23.

<sup>80</sup> V. *Theod. Thess.*, chaps. 38, 43.

but soon converted to the use of monks;<sup>81</sup> hence for our knowledge of the layout of nunneries we must rely primarily on the plans of male monasteries and the evidence of texts. Analysis of the ground plan of contemporary Greek Orthodox nunneries may also prove useful, if it is valid to argue that they have retained a traditional division of space that reflects Byzantine practice. At Ormylia, for example, in the Chalkidike peninsula of northern Greece, the new convent of the Annunciation maintains a distinct separation between areas to the west accessible to lay visitors and those to the east, the “sanctum” (including the cell wing and abbess’s quarters), restricted to the nuns.<sup>82</sup> This division of the complex into areas with varying degrees of privacy characterizes male monasteries as well.

The chief areas restricted to nuns seem to have been the dormitories, workrooms, refectory, and bathhouse. Cenobitic nuns slept either in communal dormitories or in individual cells;<sup>83</sup> at Kecharitomene, certain intercalary offices (e.g., the *mesoria* of none) were sung in the dormitory and hence were an exclusively female service.<sup>84</sup> At the same convent a private space surrounded by a wall was provided behind the dormitory where the nuns could take recreation, that is, walk or sit on benches.<sup>85</sup> As one might expect, the dormitory was considered the most sacrosanct refuge of the nuns, and any penetration by a man would be a great scandal.<sup>86</sup> The workrooms, where the nuns did their handwork such as spinning and weaving, also seem to have been off-limits to men who would have no cause to visit. I would further argue that the refectory (and the associated kitchen and bakery) was restricted to the use of nuns and was a space dominated by the abbess and the rectorian. It served food for the spirit as well as the body, as one of the nuns always read aloud from Scripture, saints’ lives, or other edifying literature during the meal.<sup>87</sup> A fourteenth-century synodal document tells us that at least one convent refec-

<sup>81</sup> On Areia, transformed again into a nunnery in the modern era, see G. A. Choras, ‘Η “Αγία Μονή” Αρέας ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησιαστικῇ καὶ πολιτικῇ ιστορίᾳ Ναυπλίου καὶ Ἀργους (Athens, 1975). A plan of the monastery is found between pp. 40 and 41. The church is the only original 12th-century structure, but the other buildings were built on top of older foundations, so the present layout probably reflects the Byzantine plan of the complex; cf. *ibid.*, p. 40. An outside reader has noted that the monastery of St. John the Forerunner on Mount Menoikeion near Serres has also now been converted into a nunnery. On these conversions, which suggest a basic interchangeability of monastic structures for use by men or women, see A.-M. Talbot, “The Change in Status of Byzantine Monasteries from Male to Female and Vice-Versa,” in *Byzantium: Identity, Image, Influence: XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Abstracts of Communications* (Copenhagen, 1996), no. 6214.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Ormylia: the Holy Coenobium of the Annunciation*, ed. S. A. Papadopoulos (Athens, 1992), 184–85.

<sup>83</sup> A communal dormitory for twenty-four nuns (*κοιτωνίσκος, κοιμητήριον*) is specified in the Kecharitomene *typikon* (Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chaps. 6 and 73, p. 127.1907–8), private cells (*κέλλαι, κελλία*) at Lips (chap. 29, p. 122.8) and Bebaia Elpis (chap. 66, p. 55.20–31).

<sup>84</sup> Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 35.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 73, p. 127.1907–9. See also pp. 81–83.1132–35. The *typikon* seems to use the word *κοιμητήριον* for both the dormitory (e.g., p. 127.1907–8) and the nuns’ cemetery at the convent τὰ Κελλαραίας. I am following Gautier’s interpretation that the *κοιμητήριον* at Kecharitomene is the dormitory.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, an anonymous letter of the early 14th century that describes the surreptitious entrance of a vagabond monk into the Constantinopolitan nunnery of the Kanikleiou, where he was soon discovered; cf. J. Gouillard, “Après le schisme arsénite: La correspondance inédite du pseudo-Jean Chilas,” *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique* 25 (1944), 187, 206.80–82, and Janin, *Églises CP*, 277. In the *vita* of Irene of Chrysobalanton a vinedresser dreams of sneaking into a nun’s cell; cf. *V. Iren. Chrysobalant.*, chap. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Cf., e.g., Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 40, p. 89.1270–71, 1275; Bebaia Elpis, chap. 85, p. 67.14–25; Lips, chaps. 8, 29.

tory featured fresco paintings of holy women, which would reinforce the feminine character of this space.<sup>88</sup> Male visitors who stayed for a meal were offered hospitality in the hospice<sup>89</sup> or perhaps in the abbess's suite.

Areas where the nuns interacted with men were the gatehouse, the church, the infirmary, and the cemetery. The gatehouse, a transitional space marking the passageway between the outside secular world and the haven of the convent,<sup>90</sup> was obviously a prime point of contact between nuns and male visitors. Hence the enormous responsibility of the portress who held the keys to the convent gate and regulated access from the outside and egress from inside. As noted above, the gatehouse was the area where nuns met with male relatives and the abbess did business with certain laymen. It was also the place where bread and leftover food were distributed to beggars on a daily basis and where donations of bread, wine, and coins were made on special feast days and days of commemoration for the convent founder and his or her relatives.<sup>91</sup> At some nunneries the portress did not remain on constant duty at the gate but went only when summoned by the bell; at others a cell was built at the outer gate of the courtyard as a permanent residence for the gatekeeper.<sup>92</sup>

The church was another part of the convent where men and women's space overlapped: it was the place where priests celebrated the liturgy and presided over the election of the abbess,<sup>93</sup> where the spiritual father heard the nuns' confession in the narthex,<sup>94</sup> where male relatives of the founder might be buried, and where the faithful of both sexes might come to attend services and memorial rites and to visit holy shrines. Sometimes, however, the nuns seem to have conducted their own services, and the priest was relegated to a minor role, as at Kecharitomene where the abbess and *ekklesiarchissa* led the seven daily offices. The *ekklesiarchissa* stood in front of the iconostasis, leading the nuns in kneeling and prayer in unison, while the abbess read a brief catechesis and led prayers, and the nuns sang hymns or *troparia*; a priest was also present, however, to recite prayers.<sup>95</sup> At the Kecharitomene the abbess also performed the installation ceremonies of all officials.<sup>96</sup> Canon law states that nuns were permitted to enter the sanctuary to adorn and sweep it and to light candles and lamps;<sup>97</sup> we can thus assume that the *skeuo-*

<sup>88</sup> When the convent of the Theotokos of Maroules in Constantinople was converted to a male monastery, the images of female saints in the refectory were replaced with those of male saints; cf. *RegPatr* V, no. 2207; MM 1:222.

<sup>89</sup> Chapter 26 of the *typikon* of Lips states that the steward should eat lunch in the *xenon*.

<sup>90</sup> An outside reader has suggested that the liminal role of gatehouses may help to explain the architectural ornament lavished upon them. For bibliography on monastic gateways, see note 1 above.

<sup>91</sup> For descriptions of the distribution of charity at the convent gate, see Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," chaps. 59, 64; Lips, chap. 38; *typikon* of nunnery of Kosmas and Damian, chap. 60, ed. Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 139; Bebaia Elpis, chap. 89, 112. For general discussion of this function of convents, see A.-M. Talbot, "Byzantine Women, Saints' Lives, and Social Welfare," in *Through the Eye of a Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare*, ed. E. A. Hanawalt and C. Lindberg (Kirksville, Mo., 1994), 117–19.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," chap. 29; Bebaia Elpis, chap. 72; and Pétridès, "Damilas," 108.

<sup>93</sup> Election of abbess: cf. Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," chap. 11, pp. 49–51.

<sup>94</sup> Lips, chap. 11, p. 113.1–4; Kosmas and Damian, chap. 59, ed. Delehaye, *Deux typica*, 138.33–139.1.

<sup>95</sup> Gautier, "Kécharitôménè," chap. 32.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., chap. 18; the procedure for the installation of the male *oikonomos* is described in chap. 14.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. canon 15 of Patriarch Nikephoros I, ed. Rhalles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα*, IV, 428: δεῖ τὰς μοναζούσας εἰσιέναι εἰς τὸ ἄγιον θυσιαστήριον, καὶ ἀπτεῖν κηρὸν καὶ κανδῆλαν, καὶ κοσμεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ σαροῦν. Unfortunately, the *typika* for nunneries include no regulations on this subject.

*phylakissa* would have approached the altar to lay out liturgical cloths and vessels. The *typika* of nunneries give no information on where the choir sisters and other nuns stood during services; we learn, however, from a twelfth-century commentary of Balsamon that menstruating women, including nuns, were prohibited from entering the church proper, but sometimes stood in the narthex.<sup>98</sup>

The infirmary was necessarily another area in which men came into contact with women. Although women physicians existed in Byzantium, they were rare, and convent doctors were typically male, preferably a eunuch or elderly individual.<sup>99</sup> At Lips the physician was supposed to make weekly visits to the nunnery except during Lent when the gates were shut to all outsiders, whether male or female. An exception was made if a nun fell seriously ill and required urgent medical attention.<sup>100</sup>

The cemetery was another space where men were indispensable for the burial rites of nuns, both as gravediggers to prepare the graves and as priests to conduct the ceremonies. Several texts suggest, however, that only a few nuns attended the actual interment of their deceased sisters, no doubt to avoid interaction with the gravediggers.<sup>101</sup>

In addition to these buildings and areas that formed part of the monastic complex and were essential to its functioning, some convents also included annexes governed by the *typikon* but considered to be outside the cloister. For example, the Lips nunnery had a hospice (*xenon*) that is described as being “next to the convent” and attached to it. It was essentially an almshouse for twelve laywomen, served by a priest and a predominantly male staff.<sup>102</sup> The ambivalent status of the hospice, attached to the convent but outside the cloister, made it an ideal location to offer hospitality to official male visitors, if the steward had to stay for lunch or the spiritual confessor needed to spend the night.<sup>103</sup> Nunneries of imperial foundation might also include separate apartments for women of the royal family who decided to take the monastic habit, but felt unable to endure the rigors of cenobitic life. At Kecharitomene these women were assigned to cells in a small *tropike* built behind the apse of the convent refectory next to the cloister wall.<sup>104</sup> The empress had a different apartment complex, including an inner and outer courtyard, a church, and two bathhouses, separated from the convent proper by a wall with a gate that could be locked from the inside by the abbess and from the outside by the patroness. The foundress, Irene Doukaina, specified that the buildings were to be elegant, but regulated their height so that none of the residents could look into the convent or the associated male monastery of Christ Philanthropos.<sup>105</sup>

Thus one may conclude that despite the stated ideal of seclusion and segregation for monastics of both sexes, monks could be sure of avoiding contact with women only by

<sup>98</sup>Cf. Balsamon, commentary on canon 2 of Dionysios of Alexandria, PG 138:465–68, ed. Rhalles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα*, IV, 8–9. For full discussion of this passage, see R. F. Taft, “Women at Church in Byzantium: Where, When—and Why?” in this volume.

<sup>99</sup>Cf. Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 57; Bebaia Elpis, chap. 90.

<sup>100</sup>Lips, chap. 35.

<sup>101</sup>Balsamon, commentary on canon 47 of the Council in Trullo, ed. Rhalles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα*, II, 418–19; Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” p. 117.1717–18.

<sup>102</sup>Lips, chap. 50; the only female staff member was the laundress.

<sup>103</sup>Lips, chap. 26 (steward) and chap. 11 (spiritual father).

<sup>104</sup>Gautier, “Kécharitôménè,” chap. 4.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., chap. 79.

withdrawing to an isolated and restricted holy mountain,<sup>106</sup> while nuns necessarily associated on a frequent basis with the men essential to their spiritual and physical well-being. The letters written by the fourteenth-century abbess Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina, pleading with her spiritual director to make more frequent visits to her convent,<sup>107</sup> graphically demonstrate the emotional dependence some nuns developed with regard to a father confessor. It is also important to realize, however, that well-disciplined nuns and monks were able to interact with members of the opposite sex and even with their fellow monastics in a condition of impassivity or *apatheia* by avoiding looking at their faces. This ideal is expressed in a passage of the *typikon* of the male monastery of Phoberou that sought to regulate against conditions that might promote homosexuality among the monks. The founder comments that nuns are also liable to develop passionate attachments to their monastic sisters and that wise abbesses encourage their charges to avoid looking at each other directly, but always to keep their eyes downcast while conversing, the so-called custody of the eyes.<sup>108</sup> On a somewhat different note, the foundress of the Bebaia Elpis nunnery instructed her nuns to keep their eyes lowered during mealtime: "Each nun should not only have eyes for herself alone and focus her attention on the food set before her, but should concentrate to an even greater extent on the sacred readings."<sup>109</sup> A telling passage in the *vita* of Theodora of Thessalonike describes how this saintly woman greeted visitors: "In addition to the subjection of her body . . . , she also maintained rigorous control over her eyes (τὴν τῶν ὄφθαλμῶν ἀκρίβειαν). Whenever anyone who was not known to <Theodora> came to her for a prayer, she would reply to his questions while looking at the ground, on no account gazing at the face of her visitor. And after his departure she would inquire who it was and what he looked like."<sup>110</sup> Thus a nun's downcast gaze was not only an expression of humility, but also served to create a private space around her that made her immune to temptation from male visitors and other nuns. Each nun was expected to build an invisible wall around herself, comparable to the physical wall that shielded the cloister from the outside world.

#### Dumbarton Oaks

<sup>106</sup> It should be noted, however, that even monks on Mount Athos could not always escape interaction with the female sex; cf. Talbot, "Women and Mt. Athos" (as in note 26 above).

<sup>107</sup> Hero, *Choumnaina*, epp. 7.31–33, 8.39–54, 9.80–81, 15.44–45.

<sup>108</sup> Phoberou *typikon*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Noctes Petropolitanae*, 81.6–11.

<sup>109</sup> Bebaia Elpis, chap. 86.

<sup>110</sup> *V. Theod. Thess.*, chap. 40. The *vita* of Elisabeth of Herakleia describes how she kept her eyes directed toward the ground for a full three years as a sign of humility (ed. F. Halkin, "Sainte Elisabeth d'Héraclée, abbesse à Constantinople," *AB* 91 [1973], 257). Custody of the eyes was a praiseworthy practice for monks as well; we are told, for example, that the youthful St. Nikon ho Metanoeite "had great control over his stomach and eyes"; cf. D. F. Sullivan, *The Life of St. Nikon* (Brookline, Mass., 1987), 34.37. See also the *vita* of Lazaros of Galesion, *AASS*, Nov. 3: 567c, and J. Noret, *Vitae duae antiquae sancti Athanasii Athonitae* (Turnhout, 1982), *vita A*, p. 39.20 and *vita B*, chap. 30.45–47.